



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

**DECISION NOTICE:
Bearmouth Fishing Access Site (FAS) Improvement Project**

*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Office
3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804
Phone 406-542-5500*

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has owned the approximately 31-acre Bearmouth Fishing Access Site (FAS) on the upper Clark Fork River in Granite County since 2006. The FAS consists of property divided north and south by the river, and west and east by the Bearmouth Bridge, and it is located 15 miles west of Drummond and just north of Interstate Highway 90 at exit 138. The FAS is 19 river miles downstream from Drummond FAS and 18 river miles upstream from Schwartz Creek FAS (near Clinton in Missoula County). Bearmouth FAS is currently undeveloped aside from a small gravel parking area, and because it does not have a boat ramp, boaters must float 37 miles between the Drummond and Schwartz Creek FASs to access boat ramps.

In order to provide more recreational opportunities at the FAS, FWP proposes to develop the site by building a larger graveled parking area, boat ramp, and vault latrine in the southwest portion of the FAS; and by upgrading and fencing the existing parking area in the northeast portion. These improvements would provide boat access to the river and safe off-highway parking. Besides floating and angling, the public would likely continue to use the FAS for picnicking, wildlife viewing, and other similar activities. The site is and would remain day-use only.

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken and the proposed developments were not made, Bearmouth FAS would continue to be little used, with the exception of some bank angling and a few other minimal activities. Illegal dumping, vandalism, and other improper uses of the site would likely persist. Without designated areas for use, pioneered trails and hand-launch sites would likely be established, with accompanying resource damage. And if no action is taken, there would remain a 37-mile stretch of river between public boat ramps, and recreational use of the river in that section would continue to be limited. FWP law enforcement would continue to patrol the FAS, and all other regular management of the site such as weed control would remain the same as it is now.

Alternative B: Proposed (Preferred) Action

In an effort to improve recreational opportunities in the upper Clark Fork River, FWP proposes the development of Bearmouth FAS, including a gravel access road, additional parking area,

combination gravel and concrete boat ramp, concrete vault latrine, as well as fencing around an existing parking area. These improvements would accommodate the public's desired use of the site without causing major impact to the human or physical environment. The placement of the boat ramp and parking area to the southwest of the bridge is selected because that location is the most suitable, would cause few disturbances, would accommodate more vehicles (approximately 12), and would provide some protection of the boat ramp, which would reduce future maintenance costs. Installing fencing around the existing northeast parking area would discourage illegal dumping of trash, which currently occurs in its present state and is a maintenance problem and cost for FWP. Installing a latrine would encourage the proper disposal of human waste. Once developed, FWP would continue to provide general maintenance, weed control, and enforcement patrols.

PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

A Draft Environmental Assessment¹ (EA) for the proposed project was made available for public review and comment for a 32-day period from April 1, 2016 through May 2, 2016. Legal notices were published in the *Independent Record* (Helena, March 24 & 25), *Missoulian* (March 24 & 25), and *Philipsburg Mail* (March 31 & April 7) newspapers. FWP distributed 12 copies of the EA and 32 email-notifications of the EA's availability to adjacent landowners and interested individuals, groups and agencies. The EA was available for public review on FWP's web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov>), under "Recent Public Notices" beginning April 1, and comments could be made directly on the EA's webpage

PUBLIC COMMENT

FWP received no comments regarding the EA or the proposed FAS improvement project during the 32-day comment period.

SHPO CONCURRENCE

In Part II.12.a of the Draft EA for this proposed improvement project, FWP noted that:

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted and has requested additional investigation into the proposed project. A cultural resource consultant is under contract to provide a cultural resource inventory as soon as conditions allow. FWP would not begin construction until final clearance has been given by SHPO. FWP would consider design changes if necessary to accommodate SHPO requirements to protect cultural or historical resources.

The cultural resource inventory has now been completed and SHPO issued a letter of concurrence, agreeing with FWP that no historic properties would be affected by this project (Attachment).

¹ Draft EA available (and accessed 6 May 2016) on FWP's website at:
http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/environmentalAssessments/developmentImprovementsAndEnhancements/pn_0355.html

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), along with applicable laws, regulations and policies, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed action.

I have determined that the decision to proceed with the proposed action will not have a significant negative effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. By notification of this Decision Notice, along with the addition of the SHPO concurrence, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. The draft EA with Decision Notice may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at the address on page 1. The EA is still available for review on FWP's web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov>) under "Recent Public Notices" (enter "Bearmouth" in "Search Public Notices").

In accordance with FWP policy, an appeal may be made by any person who has either commented in writing to the department on the proposed project, or who has registered or commented orally at a public meeting held by the department on the proposed project, or who can provide new evidence that would otherwise change the proposed plan. An appeal must be submitted to the Director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this decision notice. The appeal must describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and how the department can provide relief. The appeal should be mailed to: Director, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 200701, 1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0701.



Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor

5-17-2016

Date

APPENDIX. SHPO Letter of Concurrence.



April 7, 2016

Bardell Mangum
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1522 9th Ave
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: Bearmouth Fishing Access Site Improvements
Granite County, Montana

Dear Mr. Mangum:

Thank you for the letter and cultural report, received April 5, 2016, regarding the proposed Bearmouth Fishing Access Site Improvements project in Granite County, Montana. We concur with a determination of No Historic Properties Effectuated for this undertaking.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me at (406)444-0388 or JBush2@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Jessica Bush, M.A.
Review and Compliance Officer
Montana State Historic Preservation Office

*Historic Preservation
Museum
Outreach & Interpretation
Publications
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RECEIVED

APR 08 2016

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

File: FWP/Fish - 2015 - 2016040594

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